



Mapping the Inspection of Early Childhood Education and Care Services in Israel

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Abstract

Background

Numerous studies indicate that a person's early years are crucial to the development of their cognitive, social, and educational skills. The goals of the inspection of early childhood education and care services are to ensure that they meet the required standards of quality and to promote their continuous improvement. In Israel, the inspection of educational services for children aged three to six falls under the responsibility of the Early Childhood Education Division in the Ministry of Education and, as of January 2022, the ministry also assumed professional responsibility for daycare centers for infants and toddlers (from birth to age three).

The transfer of responsibility to the Ministry of Education stemmed from the recognition of the importance of creating a childcare and educational continuum for age birth to age six. Furthermore, this change was based on the view that early childhood education and care services are primarily designed to address the developmental needs of children, rather than the previously accepted purpose of serving as a means for promoting employment among mothers. As a result of this change, the Ministry of Education is now in charge of all early childhood education and care services in Israel, from birth to age six, which serve seven or more children (not including family-based daycare, daycare centers for children with special needs and rehabilitative daycare centers).

The expansion of early childhood education and care services under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education has introduced many new challenges, in addition to existing ones. As a result, the Early Childhood Education Division in the Ministry of Education commissioned the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute to help develop a knowledge and information infrastructure that would enable the division to regulate the inspection of early childhood education and care services. As a basis for this knowledge infrastructure, an international review was conducted to determine best practices for the inspection of early childhood education and care frameworks in various countries around the world.¹

¹ Beserman Navon, L., Asulin, M., Dolev, H. & Ben Rabi, D. (2023). *Inspection of Early Childhood Education and Care Provision: An International Review*. RR-931-23. Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute. <https://brookdale.jdc.org.il/publication/inspection-of-early-childhood-education-and-care-provision/> (Hebrew)

The present document constitutes an additional component of the knowledge infrastructure. It maps the current inspection system of early childhood education and care services in Israel, which is divided into the **inspection of daycare centers** (birth to age three) and the **inspection of preschools and kindergartens** (hereafter preschools) for ages three to six. Each of these two operational domains within the Ministry has a distinct organizational structure and a separate educational-childcare approach. For this reason, the research was conducted independently for each domain, and this report presents the findings in two separate sections.

Objective

Create a knowledge and information infrastructure that will assist policymakers in regulating the inspection of early childhood education and care services.

Methodology

The study combined qualitative and quantitative tools. Semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups were conducted with stakeholders, including inspectors. The purpose of the interviews and focus groups was to gain an initial understanding of the inspection system and to serve as a basis for developing the questionnaires for the subsequent surveys. In the second phase, four surveys were carried out: two among inspectors of daycare centers and kindergartens, and two among educational-childcare staff in daycare centers and among preschool teachers. In addition, policy documents were collected and analyzed and professional and academic literature on the daycare and preschool systems and their inspection in Israel was reviewed.

Main Findings

The study revealed that in each of the inspection systems examined, there are areas in which inspection is well-regulated and others in which there is insufficient regulation or there is a need of improvement in policy or procedures. In the case of daycare centers, there is a specific law that defines the objectives of inspection and regulates the requirements for operating the services, as well as specifying the measures for enforcement. Inspection of preschools is anchored in a law that applies to all compulsory education institutions (from preschool to high school), without specific reference to preschools and without addressing the goals of inspection or the requirements for operating the services.

Regarding the daycare centers, the research found that, despite the short time they have been under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, the inspection is regulated in several aspects: there are defined

quality indicators, regulated frequency of supervision visits, and provision of training for inspectors. Furthermore, inspection is perceived as important and beneficial both by daycare center directors, who consult inspectors to clarify pedagogical issues, and by a significant proportion of the inspectors themselves who believe that inspection promotes children's well-being and the quality of education-childcare. However, the research findings also point to other areas in which inspection needs to be regulated, especially with regard to the inspection tasks and the relations between the inspectors and the various position holders involved.

Regarding preschools, the findings indicate that the inspection system in Israel is complicated. This stems from the fact that the inspection system operates in a complex organizational environment, in which many position holders who are involved in the operation of preschools are also responsible for the quality of the education in the preschools. In addition, inspectors bear a heavy workload because of their multiple tasks and the large number of preschools under their responsibility. The research also found that while in some areas there is a clear inspection policy, in others, particularly those related to monitoring quality and enforcement capabilities, there is a lack of regulation which influences the effectiveness of the inspections.